DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 729 CS 507 304

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TITLE The Student as Communication Tutor: Ethical Dilemmas and Responsibilities.
PUB DATE 3 Nov 90
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (76th, Chicago, IL, November 1-4, 1990). Tables contain small, light type.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; College Students; Course Descriptions; *Ethics; Higher Education; Instructional Effectiveness; *Peer Teaching; Speech Communication; *Tutorial Programs; *Tutoring
IDENTIFIERS Radford University VA; Speech Communication Education

ABSTRACT

A study investigated a communication skills tutoring program to determine if peer tutoring proved an appropriate pedagogy for communication skills training. A survey, in which questions were grouped into categories of instructional, ethical, and training issues, was distributed to 8 instructors and to 12 tutors who were enrolled in a course entitled "Communication Skills Tutoring" at Radford University. In this course communication majors learned principles and methods of "training clients" in the improvement of communication skills in such areas as public speaking, group discussion, and listening. For the applied component of the course, students were assigned to speech communication professors who used them as consultants and tutors in their public speaking classes. Results revealed strong support for this aid from a significant majority of consultants and instructors. Both groups perceived that instructors, consultants, and students benefited greatly from the experience. Results also revealed overall agreement among faculty and consultants as to what constitutes ethical and unethical consultant behavior. Findings suggest the potential merits of peer tutoring in public speaking classes. (Four tables of data are included; 22 references are attached.) (KEH)

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THE STUDENT AS COMMUNICATION TUTOR: ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Paper Presented
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Seventy-Sixth Annual Meeting
of the
Speech Communication Association

November 3, 1990
Chicago, Illinois

CS507304

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THE STUDENT AS COMMUNICATION TUTOR:

ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

> I went through it [quantum theory] once and looked up only to find the class full of blank faces--they had obviously not understood. I went through it a second time and they still did not understand it. And so I went through it a third time, and that time I understood it.1

Those of us who teach can probably identify with this observation by a university physics instructor. In fact, we sometimes quote the Japanese proverb, "To teach is to learn," or the Chinese proverb: "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." Peer tutoring programs afford students an opportunity to perform the dual roles of teacher and learner.

Greenwood, Carta and Hall (1988) define tutoring procedures as "those in which peers are used to provide direct instruction to target peers" (p. 261). The concept of tutoring as effective pedagogy for enhancing learning is hardly new. The ancient Greeks and Romans used a tutorial style of education, although there is little evidence of peer mediation. Topping (1988) identifies the "first systematic use of peer tutoring in the world" as occurring in the late 1700s, and he credits the innovation to Andrew Bell (p. 12). The one-room schoolhouse, prevalent throughout much of United

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1 Observation of a university physics instructor, quoted in: Bruner, J. The process of education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 89.

States history, utilized cross-age tutoring with older students helping their younger counterparts. Interest in peer tutoring was rekindled in the 1960s as the federal government increased funding to help disadvantaged students. Hedin (1987) argues that the number of peer tutoring programs has declined since then:

> It appears that peer teaching is not used as frequently now as in the 1960s when it was a part of large-scale compensatory education programs. A review of the tutoring literature of the past 15 years reveals that the emphasis in these programs has shifted away from programs whose primary target is the poor, minority student who is having academic problems and toward the physically or mentally handicapped and the gifted student (p. 42).

Bargh and Schul (1980), however, disagree. They contend that peer tutorial programs are "coming into increasing and widespread use in American elementary school, high school and college classrooms, with many being funded by local and federal government agencies" (p. 593). Regardless of the quantity, peer tutoring programs remain a viable supplement to our traditional "one-to-thirty" method of classroom instruction. In fact, one study suggests that of four alternatives to enhance student learning--reduced class size, increased instructional time, computer-assisted instruction, and tutoring--, peer and cross-age tutoring produces the

greatest student achievement per dollar spent (Levin, Glass & Meister, 1987).

An ERIC computer search of articles and papers with the descriptor "peer teaching" generated 660 references between the dates of January 1983 and June 1990. Some of this scholarship spotlights administrators tutoring administrators, staff tutoring staff, teachers tutoring teachers and teachers tutoring students. Most authors, however, focus on students tutoring other students, referring to this instructional relationship by titles such as peer tutoring, reciprocal peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, peer mediation, peer coaching, buddy programs and collaborative learning.

Only three of the 660 references include the word ethics in their titles or abstracts. Two focus on tutoring in writing centers (Behm, 1989; Freed, 1989). One concerns collaborative learning in general (Levy-Reiner, 1988). At least as far as titles and abstracts indicate, little has been written regarding ethical guidelines in oral communication tutoring.

This paper seeks first to investigate the benefits of a peer tutoring program, incorporating testimony from Radford tutors when possible. Second, we will describe the Radford communication skills tutoring program. Finally, we will report and discuss a survey of instructor and tutor responses to instructional, ethical and training concerns. Students providing individualized instruction to other students will be

referred to as tutors or consultants. Students receiving the instruction will be referred to as tutees or clients.

THE BENEFITS OF PEER TUTORING

If peer tutoring is justified, there must be evidence that it generates positive outcomes. Ample scholarly research on peer and cross-age tutoring suggests that both tutees and tutors benefit from such programs. Fantuzzo, Dimeff & Fox (1989), for example, found that tutored students receive higher scores and experienced lower stress than do untutored students. Other studies also document improved cognitive gains (Webb & Schwartz, 1988; Fantuzzo, Dimeff & Fox, 1989; Annis, 1983; Anderson & Smith, 1987; Greenwood, Dinwiddie, Terry, Wade, Stanley, Thibadeau & Delquadri, 1984; Greenfield & McNeil, 1987; Labbo & Teale, 1990). Gahan-Rech, Stephens and Buchalter (1989) conclude:

> Numerous studies have recently been performed concentrating on the effects of tutoring on academic achievement. The majority of the research on tutoring measures the effects on the person receiving the tutoring, with generally positive results being reported (p. 18).

A tutorial relationship offers both personalized instruction and a greater quantity of instruction. A student consultant in the Radford program states the case for peer, or "near-peer," tutoring this way:

> Often students are too intimidated to ask for help from their teachers. Many students feel more comfortable

working with people who are their peers. They can identify better with these individuals; therefore, they are less apprehensive to admit their weaknesses and seek help.

As well as creating a more relaxed atmosphere, it is most likely that a peer consultant is more readily available and accessible to the client. Peer consultants' schedules are more flexible than professors' agendas. Although professors are required to have office hours, these are rarely at night when most students do their schoolwork. Peer consultants are willing to spend hours with their clients, while professors tend to be very limited because they are responsible for many more students.

Not only do those being tutored benefit, so do those providing the instruction. Bargh and Schul (1980) note: "Somewhat surprisingly, in most cases the tutor showed even greater achievement gains than did the tutee as a result of the program" (p. 593). Annis (1983) confirms this observation. This conclusion does not surprise one Radford tutor who observes, "The best way to learn something thoroughly is to have to teach it to someone else."

Communication majors serving as tutors in the basic public speaking course have the opportunity to apply the theory and skills learned in their speech communication classes. Not only do they learn content more effectively, they may also discover more about their interpersonal skills.

If the consulting relationship is successful, their self-esteem may be enhanced. At the conclusion of their consulting experiences, three Radford consultants offered these reflections:

> The consultant experience has been the most rewarding experience of this semester.
>
> I found this to be a most rewarding experience, because it allowed me to "try out" or test what I have learned here in my four years of studying speech communication. It was also rewarding because one could work with a "C" student and turn them into an "A" speaker.
>
> As a tutor I realized how much I like helping students. I believe that I may continue to tutor public speaking students on an informal basis. The most pleasant aspect of this exercise was receiving a glimpse of the learning process from the opposite side of the desk. I was able to see, through the professor's eyes, the students' perceptions of learning. Consultants' benefit from this tutorial exercise because they learn more about themselves and public speaking.

Annis (1983) concludes in her review of the literature: "The peer tutoring studies which do exist appear to agree in finding achievement gains for both the tutor and tutee" (p. 39).

Hedin (1987) adds an additional benefit of peer tutoring: it benefits society. She contends that a "potential outcome

of large-scale student tutoring programs is that it could help recruit promising future teachers into the profession. Bright, energetic young people might discover a 'calling' to teaching through their positive experiences as peer teachers" (p. 44). One Radford consultant seems to have come to this conclusion:

> As graduation comes closer and closer to reality, I must be committed to discovering "what I want to be when I grow up." No longer can I afford to dilly-dally with far off thoughts of maybe I'll be a nuclear physicist or maybe I'll be the next leader of a social movement, just like Ghandi or Mandela. Not that these are no longer options, but I have narrowed my choices to things that are related to speech communication studies. Because of the Speech 400 Communication Tutoring class, I have been able to narrow my search even more. Working with [name of instructor] in his Speech 114 class has opened my eyes to my desire to teach. I like the academic environment, but perhaps more importantly, I enjoy the challenges of teaching.

Research, then, suggests possible benefits to tutees, tutors and even society from implementing a well-constructed peer tutoring program. The goals of peer tutoring appear achievable, worthy and ethical; certainly, the absence of positive data would undermine the case for peer tutoring.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS TUTORING AT RADFORD UNIVERSITY

The Department of Communication at Radford University offers a course entitled "Communication Skills Tutoring" under the prefixes of COMM and SPCH. The course description reads:

> Principles and methods of training clients in the improvement of communication skills in such areas as public speaking, group discussion and listening. Applied component of the course provides supervised consultation and tutoring experience.

"Communication Skills Tutoring" (CST) is a senior level course that can also be taken for graduate credit. The course may be repeated once for undergraduate credit; it cannot be repeated for graduate credit.

Students enrolled in CST are assigned to speech communication professors who use them as consultants, or tutors, in their public speaking classes. It is currently being taught for the third time and has been staffed by two instructors; consequently, there may be no "typical" description of the course. Nevertheless, the following description represents the course as it is taught by the current instructor.

1. Students in COMM/SPCH 400 (Communication Skills Tutoring) are given copies of the textbook used in SPCH 114 (Public Speaking). They review their knowledge of the principles of public speaking and the 114 course textbook. The CST instructor supplements this knowledge through lecture, discussion and handouts. At the end of the second week of

class, CST students take a public speaking proficiency examination covering this information. Students have three chances to pass the examination with each subsequent attempt requiring a higher grade. If they do not pass by their third attempt, they are dropped from the class.

2. Students collectively research articles on peer tutoring and then individually write essays on one aspect of tutoring.

3. Students learn how to operate video recording and playback equipment.

4. The instructor lectures on techniques of providing feedback to student speeches. Students then observe videotapes of student speeches and discuss how they would evaluate the speeches' content and organization and the speaker's delivery. Students write an essay on one aspect of providing evaluative feedback. As part of their first examination, they listen to and view a videotape of a student speech and write comments to the speaker.

5. Each tutor is paired with an instructor of a public speaking class. Student consultants meet with their instructors and discuss the teacher's instructional approach and how the student consultant will be involved with the class. Consultants' experiences vary from instructor to instructor. Some instructors require the tutor to attend class regularly; others only occasionally. Consultants may work with students in class in small groups, giving feedback

during the speech development phase. Others may meet with students only outside of class.

6. Consultants establish "office hours" so that students may meet with them to talk about developing their speeches. Since the consultants have access to videotape equipment and facilities, instructors often encourage or require students to make appointments with the consultant, have their speeches videotaped and receive feedback from the consultant before the student gives the speech in class. Other instructors have the consultant videotape classroom speeches, requiring students to make appointments to review the videotape with the consultant.

7. After the tutors complete their consulting experience, they submit a log of their activities and write a brief evaluation of their experiences. CST class time is also devoted to discussion of these activities.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS TUTORING SURVEY

Procedure

Communication Skills Tutoring was offered first in the fall semester of 1989 and again in spring 1990. During the spring semester, two students in the course (Bird and Dalton) and the instructor (Grice) decided to collect information from the tutors and their supervising instructors regarding the consulting experience. At that time a total of twelve students had enrolled in the course during either or both of the fall and spring semesters. A total of eight instructors had consultants assigned to them for their Speech 114 classes.

Questions were prepared and grouped into categories of instructional, ethical and training issues. Questionnaires were distributed to the twelve tutors and eight instructors. All surveys were returned completed. Respondents were instructed to indicate their agreement/disagreement with a series of questions according to the following scale:

7 = strongly agree

6 = moderately agree

5 = slightly agree

4 = neutral/neither agree nor disagree

3 = slightly disagree

2 = moderately disagree

1 = strongly disagree

Results

[Insert Tables 1 & 2 about here]

The results of the survey are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 (Instructional Issues), Table 3 (Ethical Issues) and Table 4 (Training Issues). Table 1 reports the frequency and percentage of student responses to four "instructional" issues. Table 2 summarizes instructor responses. A significant majority of students and faculty agreed that (1) students in the public speaking class benefited from services provided by the student consultant, (2) that the student consultant benefited from the experience and (3) that overall the use of student consultants in Speech 114 is desirable. A majority of the students (66.6%) felt that the instructor benefited because of services provided by the consultant.

Fifty percent of the instructors stated that teaching the class was easier because of the student consultant; 37.5% neither agree nor disagreed; and 12.5%, or one instructor, disagree with the statement.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Table 3 records consultant and instructor responses to seventeen ethical situations. One question (Q2) relates to instructor-consultant interaction: "Instructors should share with their student consultants grades they give student speakers on their speeches." Half (6) of the students agreed; three disagreed; two neither agreed nor disagreed; and one did not respond. Half (4) of the instructors agreed; three disagreed; and one neither agreed nor disagreed.

The remaining questions pertain to consultant-student interactions. A majority of consultants and instructors agreed, and none disagreed, that it is appropriate for students consultants to give feedback to student speakers both in class (Q1) and outside of class (Q3) and that it is appropriate for consultants to suggest how students could better deliver their speeches vocally (Q13) and physically (Q14).

Although there was some disagreement on each of the following, a majority of consultants and faculty agreed that it is appropriate for student consultants to suggest possible topics (Q4), evaluate topics generated by students speakers (Q5), help students speakers analyze their audience (Q6), help student speakers organize the first drafts of their speeches

(Q10) and suggest how student speakers might reorganize their speeches (Q11).

A majority of consultant and faculty respondents agreed that it was ethical for consultants to suggest possible research sources (Q7), but consultants should not help student speakers research their topics in the library (Q8). Likewise, a majority of each group felt that consultants should not help students construct their visual aids (Q15), but they could give feedback on the effectiveness of student-constructed visual aids (Q16).

A majority (75%) of instructors and half of the consultants felt that consultants should not discuss with students grades they would give the speakers.

Question 12 ("It is appropriate for student consultants to help students word their speeches") represented the only issue on which instructors and consultants disagreed. One more consultant agreed (6) than disagreed (5), and one more instructor disagreed (4) than agreed (3) with the statement. For each group, one respondent neither agreed nor disagreed.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Table 4 listed five courses taught in the department and asked respondents which should be required before a student could enroll in the CST class. The only course currently required is public speaking, and all respondents agreed that it should be required. The only other course that a majority of both groups suggested be required was persuasion. In

general, students were more likely to support additional required courses than were faculty.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY

The results of the survey of instructors and consultants in Radford University's communication skills tutoring program prompt two conclusions. First, the program has strong support from a significant majority of consultants and instructors. Both groups perceive that instructors, consultants and students benefit from the experience. Second, there appears to be agreement among faculty and consultants as to what, generally, constitutes ethical and unethical consultant behavior. The survey questions, however, are ambiguous, leaving much to the interpretation of the respondent.

The following recommendations are offered regarding the limitations of the survey. First, the survey may be best used as a stimulus for class discussion in the Communication Skills Tutoring class. Students might complete the questionnaire and then meet in small groups to discuss their responses. The discussion might generate specific examples that could be developed into specific case studies.

Second, the survey might be revised to include examples of specific consultant behaviors or sample dialogues.

One group is conspicuously absent from the survey which, in part, assesses the benefit of the tutoring experience: the tutee. A third suggestion, then, is to construct an instrument that would collect assessment data from students receiving instruction.

The limitations of the survey should not detract from the potential merits of peer tutoring. All but one tutor and every instructor agreed that the use of student consultants in the public speaking course is desirable. In fact, 62.5% of the faculty strongly agreed with the statement and 25% moderately agreed. Fifty percent of the students strongly agreed and 33.3% moderately agreed. Hedin (1987) notes that "tutoring is not a panacea for solving all problems of student motivation and passivity," but it is "a powerful educational tool for developing certain academic skills and for strengthening the tutor's personal development" (p. 14). Peer tutoring seems an appropriate pedagogy for communication skills training.

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TABLE 1
INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES
STUDENTS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Students in 114 classes benefited from services I provided as a student consultant.		1/ 8.3%		1/ 8.3%	2/16.7%	4/33.3%	4/33.3%
2. I benefited from my experience as a student consultant.			1/ 8.3%		2/16.7%	4/33.3%	5/41.7%
3. The instructor of the course benefited because of services I provided as a student consultant.	1/ 8.3%		1/ 8.3%	2/16.7%	4/33.3%	1/ 8.3%	3/25.0%
4. Overall, the use of student consultants in Speech 114 is desirable.			1/ 8.3%		1/ 8.3%	4/33.3%	6/50.0%

TABLE 2
INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES
FACULTY

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Students in my class(es) have benefited from services provided by the student consultant.			1/12.5%		1/12.5%	5/62.5%	1/12.5%
2. The student consultant benefited because of his/her involvement in my class.				1/12.5%	3/37.5%	3/37.5%	1/12.5%
3. Teaching this class was easier for me because of the student consultant.			1/12.5%	3/37.5%	2/25.0%	1/12.5%	1/12.5%
4. Overall, the use of student consultants in Speech 114 is desirable.					1/12.5%	2/25.0%	5/62.5%

TABLE 3
ETHICAL ISSUES

Student responses are recorded on the first line; faculty responses are on the second.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. It is appropriate for student consultants to give feedback in class to student speakers.				3/25.0% 2/25.0%	1/ 8.3%	5/41.7% 4/50.0%	3/25.0% 2/25.0%
2. Instructors should share with their student consultants grades they give student speakers on their speeches.	1/12.5%	2/16.7% 2/25.0%	1/ 8.3%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	2/16.7% 3/37.5%	2/16.7%	2/16.7%* 1/12.5%
	* One student did not respond.						
3. It is appropriate for student consultants to give feedback to to student speakers in outside-of-class practice sessions.				1/ 8.3%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	7/58.3% 6/75.0%
It is appropriate for student consultants to help student speakers in the following ways:							
4. suggest possible topics	1/ 8.3%	1/ 8.3% 1/12.5%	1/12.5%	2/16.7%	2/25.0%	3/25.0%	5/41.7% 4/50.0%
5. evaluate topics generated by student speakers		1/ 8.3% 1/12.5%		2/16.7%	2/25.0%	5/41.7% 1/12.5%	4/33.3% 4/50.0%
6. help student speakers analyze their audience			1/12.5%	1/ 8.3%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	2/16.7% 2/25.0%	7/58.3% 4/50.0%
7. suggest possible research sources			1/ 8.3% 1/12.5%	1/ 8.3%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	4/33.3% 1/12.5%	4/33.3% 5/62.5%
8. help student speakers research their topics in the library	6/50.0% 3/37.5%	1/ 8.3% 2/25.0%	1/ 8.3% 2/25.0%	2/16.7%	1/ 8.3%		1/ 8.3% 1/12.5%
9. evaluate research material collected by student speakers	1/ 8.3%	1/12.5%	1/ 8.3% 1/ 12.5%	5/41.7% 2/25.0%	1/ 8.3%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	2/16.7% 3/37.5%
10. help student speakers organize the first drafts of their speeches	3/37.5%		2/16.7%	3/25.0%	3/25.0% 3/37.5%	2/16.7%	2/16.7% 2/25.0%
11. suggest how student speakers might reorganize their speeches	1/12.5%	1/ 8.3%		1/ 8.3%	4/33.3% 3/37.5%	5/41.7%	1/ 8.3% 4/50.0%
12. help students word their speeches	2/16.7% 3/37.5%		3/25.0% 1/12.5%	1/ 8.3% 1/12.5%	4/33.3% 2/25.0%	2/16.7%	1/12.5%
13. suggest how students could better deliver their speeches vocally				1/ 8.3%	2/16.7% 2/25.0%	3/25.0% 1/12.5%	6/50.0% 5/62.5%
14. suggest how students could better deliver their speeches physically				1/ 8.3%	2/16.7% 2/25.0%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	7/58.3% 5/62.5%
15. help students construct their visual aids	2/16.7% 4/50.0%	3/25.0% 2/25.0%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	3/25.0%	1/ 8.3%		1/ 8.3% 1/12.5%
16. give feedback on the effectiveness of student-constructed visual aids		1/ 8.3%		2/16.7%	1/ 8.3% 3/37.5%	2/16.7% 1/12.5%	6/50.0% 4/50.0%
17. discuss with the student speaker after a practice session the grade the student consultant would give the speech	5/41.7% 5/62.5%	1/12.5%	1/ 8.3%	3/25.0% 1/12.5%	1/8.3%	2/16.7%	1/12.5%

TABLE 4
TRAINING

Of the courses listed below which should be required before a student may enroll in COMM/SPCH 400 (Communication Skills Tutoring) and be assigned to consult in a SPCH 114 class?

Course	Student Response	Faculty Response
SPCH 114: Public Speaking	12/100.0%	8/100.0%
SPCH 333: Persuasion	10/ 83.3%	7/ 87.5%
SPCH 337: Discussion	6/ 50.0%	2/ 25.0%
SPCH 431: Interpersonal Communication	5/ 41.7%	2/ 25.0%
SPCH 433: Public Address and Rhetorical Theory	4/ 33.3%	1/ 12.5%
Other (Oral Interpretation)	0/ 00.0%	1/ 12.5%